

New records of alien stick-insects

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Abstract

Bacillus whitei Nascetti & Bullini from Sicily is reported as an accidental introduction to Britain, feeding on previously unreported food-plants. *Carausius morosus* (Sinéty) from India is listed as an established alien in the Cape Suburbs, South Africa.

Key words

Phasmida, *Bacillus whitei*, *Carausius morosus*, alien.

Introduction

Malcolm Lee's excellent update on stick-insects in Britain (1998), has prompted me to report further alien species established in Britain and South Africa.

The Alien species

It is difficult to decide exactly when an alien species is regarded as established. Lee (1998) refers to a number of records of species, including *Carausius morosus* (Sinéty). Some specimens may survive for just one generation, in which case they cannot be treated as established; however, stocks may become hardy in suitable climates. Although I exercise care when cleaning out phasmids, I must have thrown away eggs or nymph(s) when rearing *Bacillus whitei* Nascetti & Bullini, which I brought back from Canicattini Bagni, Sicily (Italy) in October 1989. In summer 1991, a neighbour returned an adult female to me; apart from isolated instances, it is only in 1998 that I have noticed several specimens in two main locations in my garden (Slough, Berkshire), although another neighbour remarked on specimens seen in his garden in 1997. Having reared other *Bacillus* species from time to time, I carefully examined the eggs and adults to confirm the identification (using Brock, 1991). On 5th May 1999 I found a two legged *B. whitei* which had clearly over-wintered.

In the front garden, *B. whitei* favours *Leptospermum scoparium* (Myrtaceae) and, although the usual food-plant bramble *Rubus fruticosus* (Rosaceae) is available, in the back garden they are well established on *Rhamnus alaternus* (Rhamnaceae). I found third instar nymphs on *Leptospermum* as early as March 1998 (removed from the plant for rearing) which reached adult by May 1998. 70-100mm long adults have been seen in various colour forms ranging from plain green or brown to mottled grey; those on *Rhamnus* are still alive at the time of writing (October, 1998) and are remarkably well camouflaged amongst the foliage. As I have not reared *B. whitei* since 1991, they must have been established in gardens for at least 7 years.

Whilst collecting in the Cape Suburbs in September 1998, I discussed local stick-insects with Hamish Robertson, entomology curator at the South African Museum, Cape Town. He understood that an alien species had been established in the suburbs and occasionally received reports of stick insects from residents. One lady had telephoned him, distressed that pest control people had recently killed all the adults on ivy (often mentioned as a food-plant), but she now had lots of nymphs. This pointed towards a suspect known to many schoolchildren as the Indian or Laboratory Stick-insect, *C. morosus*, but the museum had no specimens to confirm this. However, a search of the literature revealed a sketch of a 'stick-insect' made on 14th September 1987 from the 'Cape Flats' resembling *C. morosus* (McMahon & Fraser, 1988). On 13th September 1998, when locating my third species of stick-insect in the grounds of our cottage accommodation at Constantia Nek, I was able to prove that it was *C. morosus*: a 78mm long adult female was resting on a wall near flowering plants of various species.


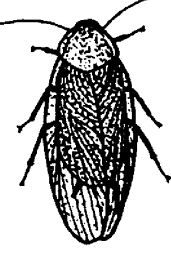
Conclusion

The record of *B. whitei* is the first note of this species in Britain, or anywhere outside Sicily.

Although not previously reported from South Africa, *C. morosus* is probably very widespread on many food-plants in the Cape Suburbs, both in gardens and in the 'fynbos' areas (characteristic vegetation of the southern and southwestern Cape Province, South Africa). It is likely that the stock originated from specimens being reared by Le Feuvre (1936), who published a useful account of the two native species found in the Cape Suburbs (*Macynia labiata* (Thunberg) and *Phalces longiscaphus* (de Haan)). It is not known whether this was an accidental release or deliberate introduction. *C. morosus* has been found in the wild in various parts of Britain and California, USA (Brock, 1992).

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